Kalevala

The Kalevala (Finnish: *Kalevala*, IPA: [ˈkɑleʲʋɑlɑ]) is a 19th-century work of epic poetry compiled by Elias Lönnrot from Karelian and Finnish oral folklore and mythology.[1]

It is regarded as the national epic of Karelia and Finland[Note 1] and is one of the most significant works of Finnish literature. *The Kalevala* was instrumental in the development of the Finnish national identity, the intensification of Finland's language strife and the growing sense of nationality that ultimately led to Finland's independence from Russia in 1917.[3][4]

The first version of *The Kalevala* (called *The Old Kalevala*) was published in 1835. The version most commonly known today was first published in 1849 and consists of 22,795 verses, divided into fifty folk stories (Finnish: *runot*).[5]

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The Kalevala

Kalevala. The Finnish national epic by Elias Lönnrot. First edition, 1835.

Author	Elias Lönnrot
Original title	*Kalevala* (or *Kalewala*, first edition, 1835)
Translator	John Addison Porter, John Martin Crawford, William Forsell Kirby, Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr., Eino Friberg, and Keith Bosley
Country	Grand Duchy of Finland, now Republic of Finland
Language	Finnish; translated multiple times
Genre	Epic poetry, National epic
Publisher	J. C. Frenckell ja Poika, among others

External links

Publication date	1835: *Old Kalevala* 1849: *New Kalevala*
Published in English	1888, 1907, 1963, 1989
Pages	*Old Kalevala*: vol 1, 208pp; vol 2, 334pp *New Kalevala*: ~500pp.

Collection and compilation

Elias Lönnrot

Elias Lönnrot (9 April 1802 – 19 March 1884) was a physician, botanist, linguist, and poet. During the time he was compiling the *Kalevala* he was the district health officer based in Kajaani responsible for the whole Kainuu region in the eastern part of what was then the Grand Duchy of Finland. He was the son of Fredrik Johan Lönnrot, a tailor and Ulrika Lönnrot; he was born in the village of Sammatti, Uusimaa.

At the age of 21, he entered the Imperial Academy of Turku and obtained a master's degree in 1826. His thesis was entitled *De Vainamoine priscorum fennorum numine* (*Väinämöinen, a Divinity of the Ancient Finns*). The monograph's second volume was destroyed in the Great Fire of Turku the same year.[6][7]

In the spring of 1828, he set out with the aim of collecting folk songs and poetry. Rather than continue this work, though, he decided to complete his studies and entered Imperial Alexander University in Helsinki to study medicine. He earned a master's degree in 1832. In January 1833, he started as the district health officer of Kainuu and began his work on collecting poetry and compiling the *Kalevala*. Throughout his career Lönnrot made a total of eleven field trips within a period of fifteen years.[8][9]

Prior to the publication of the *Kalevala*, Elias Lönnrot compiled several related works, including the three-part *Kantele* (1829–1831), the *Old Kalevala* (1835) and the *Kanteletar* (1840).

Lönnrot's field trips and endeavours not only helped him to compile the *Kalevala*, but also brought considerable enjoyment to the people he visited; he would spend much time retelling what he had collected as well as learning new poems.[10][11]

Poetry

History

Before the 18th century the Kalevala poetry was common throughout Finland and Karelia, but in the 18th century it began to disappear in Finland, first in western Finland, because European rhymed poetry became more common in Finland. Finnish folk poetry was first written down in the 17th century[12][13] and collected by hobbyists and scholars through the following centuries. Despite this, the majority of Finnish poetry remained only in the oral tradition.

Finnish born nationalist and linguist Kaarle Akseli Gottlund (1796–1875) expressed his desire for a Finnish epic in a similar vein to *The Iliad*, *Beowulf* and the *Nibelungenlied* compiled from the various poems and songs spread over most of Finland. He hoped that such an endeavour would incite a sense of nationality and independence in the native Finnish people.[14] In 1820, Reinhold von Becker founded the

journal *Turun Wiikko-Sanomat* (Turku Weekly News) and published three articles entitled *Väinämöisestä* (*Concerning Väinämöinen*). These works were an inspiration for Elias Lönnrot in creating his masters thesis at Turku University.[6][15]

The statue of Väinämöinen by Robert Stigell (1888) decorates the *Vanha Ylioppilastalo* (Old Student House) built in 1870 in Helsinki, Finland.

In the 19th century, collecting became more extensive, systematic and organised. Altogether, almost half a million pages of verse have been collected and archived by the Finnish Literature Society and other collectors in what are now Estonia and the Republic of Karelia.[16] The publication *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* (*Ancient Poems of the Finns*) published 33 volumes containing 85,000 items of poetry over a period of 40 years. They have also archived 65,000 items of poetry that remain unpublished.[17] By the end of the 19th century this pastime of collecting material relating to Karelia and the developing orientation towards eastern lands had become a fashion called Karelianism, a form of national romanticism.

The chronology of this oral tradition is uncertain. The oldest themes (the origin of Earth) have been interpreted to have their roots in distant, unrecorded history and could be as old as 3,000 years.[18] The newest events (e.g. the arrival of Christianity) seem to be from the Iron Age. Finnish folklorist Kaarle Krohn proposes that 20 of the 45 poems of *The Kalevala* are of possible Ancient Estonian origin or at least deal with a motif of Estonian origin (of the remainder, two are Ingrian and 23 are Western Finnish).[19]

It is understood that during the Finnish reformation in the 16th century the clergy forbade all telling and singing of pagan rites and stories. In conjunction with the arrival of European poetry and music this caused a significant reduction in the number of traditional folk songs and their singers. Thus the tradition faded somewhat but was never totally eradicated.[20]

Lönnrot's field trips

In total, Lönnrot made eleven field trips in search of poetry. His first trip was made in 1828 after his graduation from Turku University, but it was not until 1831 and his second field trip that the real work began. By that time he had already published three articles entitled *Kantele* and had significant notes to build upon. This second trip was not very successful and he was called back to Helsinki to attend to victims of the Second cholera pandemic.[21]

The third field trip was much more successful and led Elias Lönnrot to Viena in east Karelia where he visited the town of Akonlahti, which proved most successful. This trip yielded over 3,000 verses and copious notes.[22] In 1833, Lönnrot moved to Kajaani where he was to spend the next 20 years as the district health officer for the region. His fourth field trip was undertaken in conjunction with his work as a doctor; a 10-day jaunt into Viena. This trip resulted in 49 poems and almost 3,000 new lines of verse. It was during this trip that Lönnrot formulated the idea that the poems might represent a wider continuity when poem entities were performed to him along with comments in normal speech connecting them.[23][24]

A caricature of Elias Lönnrot by A. W. Linsen "Unus homo nobis currendo restituit rem" – "One man saved a kingdom for us by running".

On the fifth field trip, Lönnrot met Arhippa Perttunen who provided a large portion of the verses for *The Kalevala*. He also met a singer called Matiska in the hamlet of Lonkka on the Russian side of the border. While this singer had a somewhat poor memory, he did help to fill in many gaps in the work Lönnrot had already catalogued. This trip resulted in the discovery of almost 300 poems at just over 13,000 verses.[25]

In autumn of 1834, Lönnrot had written the vast majority of the work needed for what was to become The *Old Kalevala*; all that was required was to tie up some narrative loose ends and officially complete the work. His sixth field trip took him into Kuhmo, a municipality in Kainuu to the south of Viena. There he collected over 4,000 verses and completed the first draft of his work. He wrote the foreword and published in February of the following year.[26]

With the *Old Kalevala* now well into its first publication run, Lönnrot decided to continue collecting poems to supplement his existing work and to understand the culture more completely. The seventh field trip took him on a long winding path through the southern and eastern parts of the Viena poem singing region. He was delayed significantly in Kuhmo because of bad skiing conditions. By the end of that trip, Lönnrot had collected another 100 poems consisting of over 4,000 verses.[27] Lönnrot made his eighth field trip to the Russian border town of Lapukka where the great singer Arhippa Perttunen had learned his trade. In correspondence he notes that he has written down many new poems but is unclear on the quantity.[28]

Elias Lönnrot departed on the first part of his ninth field trip on 16 September 1836. He was granted a 14-month leave of absence and a sum of travelling expenses from the Finnish Literary Society. His funds came with some stipulations: he must travel around the Kainuu border regions and then on to the north and finally from Kainuu to the south-east along the border. For the expedition into the north he was accompanied by Juhana Fredrik Cajan. The first part of the trip took Lönnrot all the way to Inari in northern Lapland.[29] The second, southern part of the journey was more successful than the northern part, taking Lönnrot to the Russian town of Sortavala on Lake Ladoga then back up through Savo and eventually back to Kajaani. Although these trips were long and arduous, they resulted in very little Kalevala material; only 1,000 verses were recovered from the southern half and an unknown quantity from the northern half.[30]

Notable towns visited by Elias Lönnrot during his 15 years of field trips – both sides then belonged to Russia

The tenth field trip is a relative unknown. What is known however, is that Lönnrot intended to gather poems and songs to compile into the upcoming work *Kanteletar*. He was accompanied by his friend C. H. Ståhlberg for the majority of the trip. During that journey the pair met Mateli Kuivalatar in the small border town of Ilomantsi. Kuivalatar was very important to the development of the *Kanteletar*.[31] The eleventh documented field trip was another undertaken in conjunction with his medical work. During the first part of the trip, Lönnrot returned to Akonlahti in Russian Karelia, where he gathered 80 poems and a total of 800 verses. The rest of the trip suffers from poor documentation.[32]

Methodology

Lönnrot and his contemporaries (e.g. Matthias Castrén, Anders Johan Sjögren[33] and David Emmanuel Daniel Europaeus[34][35]) collected most of the poem variants (one poem could easily have countless variants) scattered across rural areas of Karelia and Ingria. Lönnrot was not really interested in, and rarely wrote down the name of the singer except for some of the more prolific cases. His primary purpose in the region was that of a physician and of an editor, not of a biographer or counsellor. He rarely knew anything in-depth about the singer himself and primarily only catalogued verse that could be relevant or of some use in his work.[36]

Karelian poem singing brothers Poavila and Triihvo Jamanen reciting traditional Finnish folk poetry, Uhtua, 1894.

The student David Emmanuel Daniel Europaeus is credited with discovering and cataloguing the majority of the Kullervo story.[35][37][38]

Of the dozens of poem singers who contributed to the *Kalevala*, significant ones are:

- Arhippa Perttunen (1769–1840)
- Juhana Kainulainen
- Matiska
- Ontrei Malinen (1780–1855)
- Vaassila Kieleväinen
- Soava Trohkimainen

Form and structure

The poetry was often sung to music built on a pentachord, sometimes assisted by a kantele player. The rhythm could vary but the music was arranged in either two or four lines in $\frac{5}{4}$ metre. The poems were often performed by a duo, each person singing alternative verses or groups of verses. This method of performance is called an antiphonic performance, it is a kind of "singing match".

Metre

Despite the vast geographical distance and customary spheres separating individual singers, the folk poetry the *Kalevala* is based on was always sung in the same metre.

The *Kalevala*'s metre is a form of trochaic tetrameter that is now known as the *Kalevala metre*. The metre is thought to have originated during the Proto-Finnic period. Its syllables fall into three types: strong, weak, and neutral. Its main rules are as follows:[39][40]

- A long syllable (one that contains a long vowel or a diphthong, or ends in a consonant) with a main stress is metrically strong.

  In the second, third, and fourth foot of a line, a strong syllable can occur in only the rising part:

  > Veli / **kul**ta, / **veik**ko/seni (1:11)
  > ("Dearest friend, and much-loved brother"[41])

  The first foot has a freer structure, allowing strong syllables in a falling position as well as a rising one:

  > Niit' **en**/nen i/soni / lauloi (1:37)
  > ("These my father sang aforetime")

- A short syllable with a main stress is metrically weak.

  In the second, third, and fourth feet, a weak syllable can occur only in the falling part:

  > Miele/ni **mi**/nun **te**/kevi (1:1)
  > ("I am driven by my longing")

  Again, the first foot's structure is more free, allowing weak syllables in a rising position as well as a falling one:

  > **ve**sois/ta ve/tele/miä (1:56)
  > ("Others taken from the saplings")

- All syllables without a main stress are metrically neutral. Neutral syllables can occur at any position.

There are two main types of line:[40]

- A normal tetrameter, word-stresses and foot-stresses match, and there is a caesura between the second and third feet:

  Veli / kulta, // veikko/seni

- A broken tetrameter (Finnish: *murrelmasäe*) has at least one stressed syllable in a falling position. There is usually no caesura:

  Miele/ni **mi**/nun **te**/kevi

Traditional poetry in the Kalevala metre uses both types with approximately the same frequency. The alteration of normal and broken tetrameters is a characteristic difference between the Kalevala metre and other forms of trochaic tetrameter.

There are also four additional rules:[40]

- In the first foot, the length of syllables is free. It is also possible for the first foot to contain three or even four syllables.

- A one-syllable word can not occur at the end of a line.
- A word with four syllables should not stand in the middle of a line. This also applies to non-compound words.
- The last syllable of a line may not include a long vowel.

Schemes

There are two main schemes featured in *The Kalevala*:[40]

- Alliteration

  Alliteration can be broken into two forms. Weak: where only the opening consonant is the same, and strong: where both the first vowel or vowel and consonant are the same in the different words. (e.g. ***va****ka* ***va****nha* ***Vä****inämöinen* "Steadfast old Väinämöinen").

- Parallelism

  Parallelism in *The Kalevala* refers to the stylistic feature of repeating the idea presented in the previous line, often by using synonyms, rather than moving the plot forward. (e.g. *Näillä raukoilla rajoilla / Poloisilla pohjan mailla* "In these dismal Northern regions / In the dreary land of Pohja"). Lönnrot has been criticised for overusing parallelism in *The Kalevala*: in the original poems, a line was usually followed by only one such parallel line.[42]

The verses are also sometimes inverted into chiasmus.

Poetry example

Verses 221 to 232 of song forty.[41][43]

Vaka vanha Väinämöinen	Väinämöinen, old and steadfast,
itse tuon sanoiksi virkki:	Answered in the words which follow:
"Näistäpä toki tulisi	"Yet a harp might be constructed
kalanluinen kanteloinen,	Even of the bones of fishes,
kun oisi osoajata,	If there were a skilful workman,
soiton luisen laatijata."	Who could from the bones construct it."
Kun ei toista tullutkana,	As no craftsman there was present,
ei ollut osoajata,	And there was no skilful workman
soiton luisen laatijata,	Who could make a harp of fishbones,
vaka vanha Väinämöinen	Väinämöinen, old and steadfast,
itse loihe laatijaksi,	Then began the harp to fashion,
tekijäksi teentelihe.	And himself the work accomplished.

Lönnrot's contribution to *Kalevala*

Very little is actually known about Elias Lönnrot's personal contributions to *The Kalevala*. Scholars to this day still argue about how much of *The Kalevala* is genuine folk poetry and how much is Lönnrot's own work - and the degree to which the text is 'authentic' to the oral tradition.[44] During the compilation process it is known that he merged poem variants and characters together, left out verses that did not fit

and composed lines of his own in order to connect certain passages into a logical plot. Similarly, individual singers would use their own words and dialect when reciting their repertoire, even going so far as to perform different versions of the same song at different times.[35][36][45][46]

The Finnish historian Väinö Kaukonen suggests that 3% of *The Kalevala*'s lines are Lönnrot's own composition, 14% are Lönnrot compositions from variants, 50% are verses which Lönnrot kept mostly unchanged except for some minor alterations, and 33% are original unedited oral poetry.[47]

Publishing

Finnish language

The first version of Lönnrot's compilation was entitled *Kalewala, taikka Wanhoja Karjalan Runoja Suomen Kansan muinoisista ajoista* ("The Kalevala, or old Karelian poems about ancient times of the Finnish people"), also known as simply the *Old Kalevala*. It was published in two volumes in 1835–1836. The *Old Kalevala* consisted of 12,078 verses making up a total of thirty-two poems.[48][49]

Even after the publication of the *Old Kalevala* Lönnrot continued to collect new material for several years. He later integrated this additional material, with significantly edited existing material, into a second version, *The Kalevala*. This *new Kalevala*, published in 1849, contains fifty poems, and is the standard text of *The Kalevala* read and translated to this day.

The name *Kalevala* rarely appears in the original folk poetry of the time; it was coined by Lönnrot for the official name of his project sometime at the end of 1834.[27][50] The first appearance of "Kalevala" in collected poetry was recorded in April 1836.[51] The choice of "Kalevala" as the name for his work was not a random choice however. The name "Kalev" appears in Finnic and Baltic folklore in many locations and the *Sons of Kalev* are known throughout Finnish and Estonian folklore.[19]

Translations

Of the few complete translations into English, it is only the older translations by John Martin Crawford (1888) and William Forsell Kirby (1907) which attempt to strictly follow the original (Kalevala metre) of the poems.[18][41] Eino Friberg's 1988 translation uses it selectively but in general is more attuned to pleasing the ear than being an exact metrical translation; it also often reduces the length of songs for aesthetic reasons.[52] In the introduction to his 1989 translation,[53] Keith Bosley stated: "The only way I could devise of reflecting the vitality of Kalevala metre was to invent my own, based on syllables rather than feet. While translating over 17,000 lines of Finnish folk poetry before I started on the epic, I found that a line settled usually into seven syllables of English, often less, occasionally more. I eventually arrived at seven, five and nine syllables respectively, using the *impair* (odd number) as a formal device and letting the stresses fall where they would."[54]:l

A notable partial translation of Franz Anton Schiefner's German translation was made by Prof. John Addison Porter in 1868 and published by Leypoldt & Holt.[55]

Edward Taylor Fletcher, a British-born Canadian literature enthusiast, also translated selections of *The Kalevala* in 1869. He read them before the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec on 17 March 1869.[56][57]

Francis Peabody Magoun published a scholarly translation of the *Kalevala* in 1963 written entirely in prose. The appendices of this version contain notes on the history of the poem, comparisons between the original *Old Kalevala* and the current version, and a detailed glossary of terms and names used in the poem.[58] Magoun also translated the *Old Kalevala*, which was published six years later entitled *The Old Kalevala and Certain Antecedents.*

Three recent translations were published in the Karelian and Urdu languages between 2009 and 2015. Thus, the *Kalevala* was published in its originating Karelian language only after 168 years since its first translation into Swedish.[59]

So far *The Kalevala* has been translated into sixty-one languages and is Finland's most translated work of literature.[60][61]

The story

The Kalevala begins with the traditional Finnish creation myth, leading into stories of the creation of the earth, plants, creatures and the sky. Creation, healing, combat and internal story telling are often accomplished by the character(s) involved singing of their exploits or desires. Many parts of the stories involve a character hunting or requesting lyrics (spells) to acquire some skill, such as boat-building or the mastery of iron making.

As well as magical spell casting and singing, there are many stories of lust, romance, kidnapping and seduction. The protagonists of the stories often have to accomplish feats that are unreasonable or impossible which they often fail to achieve leading to tragedy and humiliation.

The Sampo is a pivotal element of the whole work. Many actions and their consequences are caused by the Sampo itself or a character's interaction with the Sampo. It is described as a magical talisman or device that brings its possessor great fortune and prosperity, but its precise nature has been the subject of debate to the present day.

There are also similarities with mythology and folklore from other cultures, for example the Kullervo character and his story bearing some likeness to the Greek Oedipus. The similarity of the virginal maiden Marjatta to the Christian Virgin Mary is also striking. The arrival of Marjatta's son in the final song spelling the end of Väinämöinen's reign over Kalevala is similar to the arrival of Christianity bringing about the end of Paganism in Finland and Europe at large.[62]

Synopses

The first Väinämöinen cycle

Songs 1 and 2: The poem begins with an introduction by the singers. The Earth is created from the shards of a goldeneye (a small duck) egg and the first man (Väinämöinen) is born to the goddess Ilmatar. Väinämöinen brings trees and life to the barren world.

Songs 3 to 5: Väinämöinen encounters the jealous Joukahainen and they do battle. Joukahainen loses and pledges his sister's hand in return for his life; the sister (Aino) soon drowns herself in the sea.

The *Aino Myth*, triptych (1891). Painting by Akseli Gallen-Kallela, depicting the Aino Story of Kalevala on three panels: The left one is about the first encounter of Väinämöinen and Aino in the forest. The right one depicts mournful Aino weeping on the shore and listening to the call of the maids of Vellamo who are playing in the water. The central pane depicts fishing Väinämöinen having thrown away a small fish, now turning out to be Aino, who laughs at him and vanishes forever.

Songs 6 to 10: Väinämöinen heads to Pohjola to propose to the maiden of the north. Joukahainen attacks Väinämöinen again; Väinämöinen floats for days on the sea until he is carried by an eagle to Pohjola. He makes a deal with Louhi to get Ilmarinen to create the Sampo. Ilmarinen refuses to go to Pohjola so Väinämöinen forces him against his will. The Sampo is forged. Ilmarinen returns without a bride.

The first Lemminkäinen cycle

Songs 11 to 15: Lemminkäinen sets out to Saari (*English: The Island*) in search of a bride. He and the maid Kyllikki make vows to each other but thinking Lemminkäinen has repudiated his, the maiden repudiates hers so Lemminkäinen discards her and sets off to woo the Maiden of the North. His mother tries to stop him and be the voice of reason, but Lemminkäinen disregards her warnings, claiming that when he's in danger, his hairbrush starts to bleed. After a long journey to the North, he asks Louhi for her daughter's hand and she assigns tasks to him. While hunting for the Tuonelan joutsen (*Swan of Death*) Lemminkäinen is shot by the Pohjolan paimen (*The Shepherd of the North*) who is annoyed by his bad behavior and disrespect, and falls into the river of death. As he lies dead in the river, his mother at home notices blood flowing from Lemminkäinen's hairbrush. Remembering her son's words, she goes in search of him. With a rake given to her by Ilmarinen, she collects the pieces of Lemminkäinen scattered in the river and pieces him back together, a bee bringing her the ingredients necessary to revive him.

The second Väinämöinen cycle

Songs 16 to 18: Väinämöinen builds a boat to travel to Pohjola once again in search of a bride. He visits Tuonela (*English: The land of Death*) and is held prisoner. Väinämöinen uses his magical powers to escape and warns his people of the dangers present in Tuonela. Väinämöinen now sets out to gather the necessary spells from Antero Vipunen. Väinämöinen is swallowed and has to torture Antero Vipunen for the spells and his escape. His boat completed, Väinämöinen sets sail for Pohjola. Ilmarinen learns of this and resolves to go to Pohjola himself to woo the maiden. The Maiden of the North chooses Ilmarinen.

Lemminkäisen äiti (Lemminkäinen's mother) by Akseli Gallen-Kallela 1897 – Lemminkäinen's mother on the banks of the river of Tuonela reviving her son

Ilmarinen's wedding

Songs 19 to 25: Ilmarinen is assigned dangerous unreasonable tasks in order to win the hand of the Maiden of the North. He accomplishes these tasks with some help from the maiden herself. In preparation for the wedding beer is brewed, a giant steer is slaughtered and invitations are sent out. Lemminkäinen is uninvited. The wedding party begins and all are happy. Väinämöinen sings and lauds the people of Pohjola. The bride and bridegroom are prepared for their roles in matrimony. The couple arrive home and are greeted with drink and viands.

The second Lemminkäinen cycle

Songs 26 to 30: Lemminkäinen is resentful for not having been invited to the wedding and sets out immediately for Pohjola. On his arrival he is challenged to and wins a duel with Sariola, the Master of the North. An army is conjured to enact revenge upon Lemminkäinen and he flees to his mother. She advises him to head to the Island of Refuge. On his return he finds his house burned to the ground. He goes to Pohjola with his companion Tiera to get his revenge, but Louhi freezes the seas and Lemminkäinen has to return home. When he arrives home he is reunited with his mother and vows to build larger better houses to replace the ones burned down.

Kullervo marches to war, fresco by Akseli Gallen-Kallela, 1901 – Kullervo goes to war against Untamo and his people.

The Kullervo cycle

Songs 31–36: Untamo kills his brother Kalervo's people, but spares his wife who later begets Kullervo. Untamo sees the boy as a threat, and after trying to have him killed several times without success, sells Kullervo as a slave to Ilmarinen. Ilmarinen's wife torments and bullies Kullervo, so he tricks her into being torn apart by a pack of wolves and bears. Kullervo escapes from Ilmarinen's homestead and learns from an old lady in the forest that his family is still alive, and is soon reunited with them. While returning home from paying taxes, he meets and seduces a young maiden, only to find out that she is his sister. She kills herself and Kullervo returns home distressed. He decides to wreak revenge upon Untamo and sets out to find him. Kullervo wages war on Untamo and his people, laying all to waste, and then returns home, where he finds his farm deserted. Filled with remorse and regret, he kills himself in the place where he seduced his sister.

The second Ilmarinen cycle

Songs 37–38: Grieving for his lost love, Ilmarinen forges himself a wife out of gold and silver, but finds her to be cold and discards her. He heads for Pohjola and kidnaps the youngest daughter of Louhi. She is outraged and insults him badly so he sings magic and turns her into a bird. He returns to Kalevala and tells Väinämöinen about the prosperity and wealth that has met Pohjola's people thanks to the Sampo.

The plunder of the Sampo (the third Väinämöinen cycle)

Songs 39–44: Väinämöinen, Ilmarinen and Lemminkäinen sail to Pohjola to recover the Sampo. While on their journey they kill a monstrous pike and from its jaw bone the first kantele is made. The heroes arrive in Pohjola and demand a share of the Sampo's wealth or they will take the whole Sampo by force. Louhi musters her army however Väinämöinen lulls to sleep everyone in Pohjola with his music. The Sampo is taken from its vault of stone and the heroes set out for home. Louhi conjures a great army, turns herself into an eagle and fights for the Sampo. In the battle the Sampo is lost to the sea and destroyed.

Louhi's revenge on Kalevala

Songs 45–49: Enraged at the loss of the Sampo, Louhi sends the people of Kalevala diseases and a great bear to kill their cattle. She hides the sun and the moon and steals fire from Kalevala. Väinämöinen heals all of the ailments and, with Ilmarinen, restores the fire. Väinämöinen forces Louhi to return the Sun and the Moon to the skies.

The Marjatta cycle

Song 50: The shy young virgin Marjatta becomes impregnated from a lingonberry she ate while tending to her flock. She begets a son. Väinämöinen orders the killing of the boy, but the boy begins to speak and reproaches Väinämöinen for ill judgement. The child is then baptised King of Karelia. Väinämöinen sails away leaving only his songs and kantele as legacy.

The poem ends and the singers sing a farewell and thank their audience.

Characters

An ancient Finnish Hero – Illustration from inside front of Volume 1 of Kalevala

Väinämöinen

Väinämöinen, the central character of *The Kalevala*, is a shamanistic hero with a magical power of song and music similar to that of Orpheus. He is born of Ilmatar and contributes to the creation of Earth as it is today. Many of his travels resemble shamanistic journeys, most notably one where he visits the belly of a ground-giant, Antero Vipunen, to find the songs of boat building.

Väinämöinen created and plays the kantele, a Finnish stringed instrument that resembles and is played like a zither.[63][64]

Väinämöinen's search for a wife is a central element in many stories; although he never finds one. One of his potential brides, Joukahainen's sister Aino, drowns herself instead of marrying him. He is the leading member of the group which steals the Sampo from the people of Pohjola.

Ilmarinen

Seppo Ilmarinen, is a heroic artificer (comparable to the Germanic Weyland and the Greek Daedalus). He crafted the dome of the sky, the Sampo and various other magical devices featured in *The Kalevala*. Ilmarinen is the second member of the group who steal the Sampo.

Ilmarinen, like Väinämöinen, also has many stories told of his search for a wife, reaching the point where he forges one of gold.

Lemminkäinen

Lemminkäinen, a handsome, arrogant and reckless ladies-man, is the son of Lempi (*English: lust or favourite*). He shares a very close relationship with his mother, who revives him after he has been drowned in the river of Tuonela while pursuing the object of his romantic desires. This section of *The Kalevala* echoes the myth of Osiris. Lemminkäinen is the third member of the group which steals the Sampo from Pohjola.

Ukko

Ukko (*English: Old man*) is the god of sky and thunder, and the leading deity mentioned within *The Kalevala*. He corresponds to Thor and Zeus. John Martin Crawford wrote that the name may be related to the obsolete Hungarian word for an old man (*agg*).[18]

Joukahainen

Joukahainen is a base, young man who arrogantly challenges Väinämöinen to a singing contest which he loses. In exchange for his life Joukahainen promises his young sister Aino to Väinämöinen. Joukahainen attempts to gain his revenge on Väinämöinen by killing him with a crossbow but only succeeds in killing Väinämöinen's horse. Joukahainen's actions lead to Väinämöinen promising to build a Sampo in return for Louhi rescuing him.

Louhi

Louhi, the Mistress of the North, is the shamanistic matriarch of the people of Pohjola, a people rivalling those of Kalevala. She is the cause of much trouble for Kalevala and its people.

Louhi at one point saves Väinämöinen's life. She has many daughters whom the heroes of Kalevala make many attempts, some successful, to seduce. Louhi plays a major part in the battle to prevent the heroes of Kalevala from stealing back the Sampo, which as a result is ultimately destroyed. She is a powerful witch with a skill almost on a par with that of Väinämöinen.

Kullervo

Kullervo is the vengeful, mentally ill, tragic son of Kalervo. He was abused as a child and sold into slavery to Ilmarinen. He is put to work and treated badly by Ilmarinen's wife, whom he later kills. Kullervo is a misguided and troubled youth, at odds with himself and his situation. He often goes into berserk rage and in the end commits suicide.

Marjatta

Marjatta is the young virgin of Kalevala. She becomes pregnant from eating a lingonberry. When her labour begins she is expelled from her parents' home and leaves to find a place where she can sauna and give birth. She is turned away from numerous places but finally finds a place in the forest and gives birth to a son. Marjatta's nature, impregnation and searching for a place to give birth are in allegory to the Virgin Mary and the Christianisation of Finland.[65] Marjatta's son is later condemned to death by Väinämöinen for being born out of wedlock. The boy in turn chastises Väinämöinen and is later crowned King of Karelia. This angers Väinämöinen, who leaves Kalevala after bequeathing his songs and kantele to the people as his legacy.

Influence

The *Kalevala* is a major part of Finnish culture and history. It has affected the arts in Finland and in other cultures around the world.

Finnish daily life

The influence of *The Kalevala* in daily life and business in Finland is tangible. Names and places associated with *The Kalevala* have been adopted as company and brand names and even as place names.

There are several places within Finland with *Kalevala*-related names, for example: the district of Tapiola in the city of Espoo; the district of Pohjola in the city of Turku, the district of Metsola in the city of Vantaa and the district of Kaleva in the city of Tampere; the historic provinces of Savo and Karjala and the Russian town of Hiitola are all mentioned within the songs of *The Kalevala*. In addition the Russian

town of Ukhta was in 1963 renamed Kalevala. In the United States a small community founded in 1900 by Finnish immigrants is named Kaleva, Michigan; many of the street names are taken from *The Kalevala*.

The banking sector of Finland has had at least three *Kalevala*-related brands: *Sampo* (name changed to Danske Bank in late 2012), *Pohjola* and *Tapiola*.

The jewellery company Kalevala Koru was founded in 1935 on the 100th anniversary of the publication of the *Old Kalevala*. It specialises in the production of unique and culturally important items of jewellery. It is co-owned by the Kalevala Women's League and offers artistic scholarships to a certain number of organisations and individuals every year.[66]

The Finnish dairy company Valio has a brand of ice-cream named *Aino*, specialising in more exotic flavours than their normal brand.[67]

The construction group Lemminkäinen was formed in 1910 as a roofing and asphalt company, the name was chosen specifically to emphasise that they were a wholly Finnish company. They now operate internationally.[68][69]

Finnish calendar

Kalevala Day is celebrated in Finland on 28 February, to match Elias Lönnrot's first version of *The Kalevala* in 1835.[70] By its other official name, the day is known also as the *Finnish Culture Day*.[71]

Several of the names in *The Kalevala* are also celebrated as Finnish name days. The name days themselves and the dates they fall upon have no direct relationship with *The Kalevala* itself; however, the adoption of the names became commonplace after the release of *The Kalevala*.[72]

Art

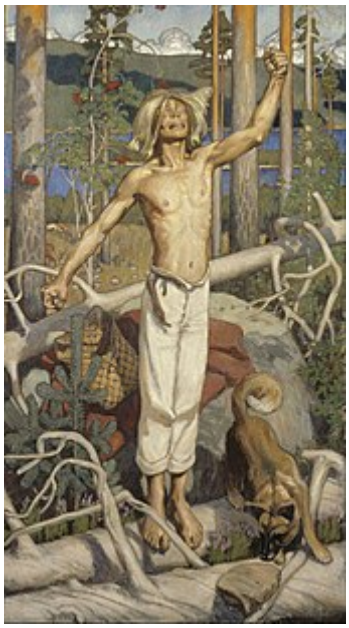
Several artists have been influenced by the *Kalevala*, most notably Akseli Gallen-Kallela who has painted many pieces relating to the *Kalevala*.[73]

Iittala group's Arabia brand kilned a series of *Kalevala* commemorative plates, designed by the late Raija Uosikkinen (1923–2004). The series ran from 1976 to 1999 and are highly sought after collectables.[74][75]

One of the earliest artists to depict a scene from the *Kalevala* is Robert Wilhelm Ekman.[76] One of his paintings depicts Väinämöinen playing his kantele.

In 1989, the fourth full translation of the *Kalevala* into English was published, richly illustrated by Björn Landström.[77]

In 2018, Sunish Chabba published Kalevala Playing Cards,[78] a hand-drawn set of Playing Cards based on the epic. A collaboration between Sunish Chabba and Ishan Trivedi, this project was crowdfunded on Kickstarter. A limited edition linen cotton canvas art print (https://ksr-ugc.imgix.net/assets/022/188/019/01afcf402ae4311ef20153ebb19aa71d_ori



The lachrymose Kullervo has been a source of inspiration for several artists.

ginal.jpg?ixlib=rb-1.1.0&w=639&fit=max&v=1533907154&auto=format&gif-q=50&q=92&s=57c83342ccff9ae368e94a539b53bc5d) inspired from Väinämöisen soitto was also produced.

Literature

The *Kalevala* has been translated over one-hundred and fifty times into over sixty different languages.[79] (See § translations.)

Re-tellings

Finnish cartoonist Kristian Huitula illustrated the comic book adaptation of the *Kalevala*. The *Kalevala Graphic Novel* contains the storyline of all the 50 chapters in original text form.[80]

Finnish cartoonist and children's writer Mauri Kunnas wrote and illustrated *Koirien Kalevala* (*The Canine Kalevala*). The story is that of *The Kalevala* with the characters presented as anthropomorphised dogs, wolves and cats. The story deviates from the full *Kalevala*, presumably, to make the story more appropriate for children.[81]

The *Kalevala* also inspired the American Disney cartoonist Don Rosa to draw a Donald Duck story based on *The Kalevala*, called *The Quest for Kalevala*.[82] The comic was released in the year of the 150th anniversary of *The Kalevala*'s publication.[83]

Works inspired by

Franz Anton Schiefner's translation of the *Kalevala* was one inspiration for Longfellow's 1855 poem The Song of Hiawatha, which is written in a similar trochaic tetrameter.[84][85]

Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald's Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg* was inspired by *The Kalevala*. Both Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen are mentioned in the work and the overall story of Kalevipoeg (Kalev's son) bears similarities with the Kullervo story.[86]

J. R. R. Tolkien claimed *The Kalevala* as one of his sources for *The Silmarillion*. For example, Kullervo is the basis of Túrin Turambar in *Narn i Chîn Húrin*, including the sword that speaks when the anti-hero uses it to commit suicide. Echoes of *The Kalevala*'s characters, Väinämöinen in particular, can be found in Tom Bombadil of *The Lord of the Rings*.[87][88]

The Neustadt Prize-winning poet and playwright Paavo Haavikko who is regarded as one of Finland's finest writers, also took influence from *The Kalevala*, including the poem *Kaksikymmentä ja yksi* (1974), and the TV-drama *Rauta-aika* (1982) [89][90]

American science fiction and fantasy authors L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt used the *Kalevala* as source materials for their 1953 fantasy novella "The Wall of Serpents". This is the fourth story in the authors' Harold Shea series, in which the hero and his companions visit various mythic and fictional worlds. In this story, the characters visit the world of the Kalevala, where they encounter characters from the epic drawn with a skeptical eye.

Emil Petaja was an American science fiction and fantasy author of Finnish descent. His best known works, known as the *Otava Series*, make up a series of novels based on *The Kalevala*. The series brought Petaja readers from around the world, while his mythological approach to science fiction was discussed

in scholarly papers presented at academic conferences.[91] He has a further *Kalevala* based work which is not part of the series, entitled *The Time Twister*.

British fantasy author Michael Moorcock's sword and sorcery anti-hero, Elric of Melniboné is influenced by the character Kullervo.[92]

British Fantasy author Michael Scott Rohan's *Winter Of The World* series feature Louhi as a major antagonist and include many narrative threads from the *Kalevela*.

The web comic "A Redtail's Dream", written and illustrated by Minna Sundberg, cites the *Kalevala* as an influence.[93] (Physical edition 2014.[94])

The British science fiction writer Ian Watson's *Books of Mana* duology, *Lucky's Harvest* and *The Fallen Moon*, both contain references to places and names from the *Kalevala*.[95]

The historical work *The White Death: The Epic of the Soviet-Finish Winter War* by Allen F. Chew has quotes from the Kalevala on chapter headings.[96]

Music

Music is the area which has the richest influence from the *Kalevala*, which is apt considering the way that the folk poetry and songs were originally performed.[97]

Jean Sibelius in the 1950s. Sibelius is Finland's most famous composer. Many of his works took influence from the *Kalevala*.

Classical music

The first recorded example of a musician influenced by the *Kalevala* is Filip von Schantz. In 1860, he composed the Kullervo Overture. The piece premièred on the opening of a new theatre building in Helsinki on November of the same year. Von Schantz's work was followed by Robert Kajanus' *Kullervo's death* and the symphonic poem *Aino* in 1881 and 1885 respectively. *Aino* is credited with inspiring Jean Sibelius to investigate the richness of the *Kalevala*.[98] The first opera based (although freely) upon the *Kalevala*, *Die Kalewainen in Pochjola*, was composed by Karl Müller-Berghaus in 1890, but the work has never been performed.[99]

Jean Sibelius is the best-known *Kalevala*-influenced classical composer. Twelve of Sibelius' best-known works are based upon or influenced by the *Kalevala*, including his *Kullervo*, a tone poem for soprano, baritone, chorus and orchestra composed in 1892.[100] Sibelius also composed the music of *Jääkärimarssi* (The Jäger March) to words written by Finnish soldier and writer Heikki Nurmio. The march features the line *Me nousemme kostona Kullervon* ("We shall rise in vengeance like that of Kullervo's").[101]

Other classical composers influenced by the *Kalevala*:

- Einojuhani Rautavaara[102]

- Leevi Madetoja[103]
- Uuno Klami[104]
- Tauno Marttinen[97][105]
- Aulis Sallinen[106]
- Veljo Tormis[107]

Folk metal

A number of folk metal bands have drawn on the *Kalevala* heavily for inspiration. In 1993 the Finnish bands Amorphis and Sentenced released two concept albums, *Tales from the Thousand Lakes* and *North from Here* respectively, which were the first of many that have been *Kalevala*-themed. Amorphis's 2009 album *Skyforger* also draws heavily on the *Kalevala*.[108][109] The Finnish folk metal band Ensiferum have released songs, such as "Old Man" and "Little Dreamer", which are influenced by the *Kalevala*. The third track of their *Dragonheads* EP is entitled "Kalevala Melody". It is an instrumental piece following the rhythm of the Kalevala metre.[110][111] Another Finnish folk metal band, Turisas, have adapted several verses from song nine of the *Kalevala*, "The Origin of Iron", for the lyrics of their song "Cursed Be Iron", which is the third track of the album *The Varangian Way*.[112] Finnish metal band Amberian Dawn use lyrics inspired by the *Kalevala* in their album *River of Tuoni*, as well as in its successor, *The Clouds of Northland Thunder*.[113] On 3 August 2012, Finnish folk metal band Korpiklaani released a new album entitled *Manala*. Jonne Järvelä from the band said, "Manala is the realm of the dead – the underworld in Finnish mythology. Tuonela, Tuoni, Manala and Mana are used synonymously. This place is best known for its appearance in the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*, on which many of our new songs are based."

Other musical genres

In the mid-1960s, the progressive rock band Kalevala was active within Finland and in 1974, the now prolific singer-songwriter Jukka Kuoppamäki released the song *Väinämöinen*. These were some of the first pieces of modern music inspired by the *Kalevala*.

In 1998, Ruth MacKenzie recorded the album *Kalevala: Dream of the Salmon Maiden,* a song cycle covering the part of the story concerning Aino and her choice to refuse the hand of the sorcerer Väinämöinen and instead transform herself into a salmon. MacKenzie has continued to perform the piece live.

The Karelian Finnish folk music group Värttinä has based some of its lyrics on motifs from *The Kalevala*.[114] Also, the Vantaa Chamber Choir have songs influenced by the *Kalevala'. Their* Kalevala-*themed third album,* Marian virsi *(2005), combines contemporary folk with traditionally performed folk poetry.*[115]

In 2003, the Finnish progressive rock quarterly Colossus and French Musea Records commissioned 30 progressive rock groups from around the world to compose songs based on parts of the *Kalevala*. The publication assigned each band with a particular song from the *Kalevala*, which the band was free to interpret as they saw fit. The result, titled simply *Kalevala*, is a three-disc, multilingual, four-hour epic telling the entirety of the *Kalevala*.

In the beginning of 2009, in celebration of the 160th anniversary of the *Kalevala*'s first published edition, the Finnish Literature Society, the Kalevala Society, premièred ten new and original works inspired by the *Kalevala*. The works included poems, classical and contemporary music and artwork. A book was published by the Finnish Literature Society in conjunction with the event and a large exhibition of *Kalevala*-themed artwork and cultural artefacts was put on display at the Ateneum museum in Helsinki.[116]

In 2017 a New York-based production *Kalevala the Musical* got started in celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Republic of Finland. The production features original pop, folk and world music score written by Johanna Telander. The concert version way performed across the United States and Finland.[117]

Film

In 1959, a joint Finnish/Soviet production entitled *Sampo* (a.k.a. *The Day the Earth Froze*) was released, inspired by the story of the *Sampo* from the *Kalevala*.[118]

In 1982, the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) produced a television mini-series called *Rauta-aika* (The Age of Iron), with music composed by Aulis Sallinen and book by Paavo Haavikko. The series was set "during the Kalevala times" and based upon events which take place in *The Kalevala*.[119][120] The series' part 3/4 won Prix Italia in 1983.

The martial arts film *Jadesoturi* (a.k.a. *Jade Warrior*), released in Finland on 13 October 2006, is based upon the *Kalevala* and set in Finland and China.[121]

Interpretations

The *Kalevala* has attracted many scholars and enthusiasts to interpret its contents in a historical context. Many interpretations of the themes in *The Kalevala* have been tabled. Some parts of the epic have been perceived as ancient conflicts between the early Finns and the Sami. In this context, the country of "Kalevala" could be understood as Southern Finland and *Pohjola* as Lapland.[122]

However, the place names in *Kalevala* seem to transfer the *Kalevala* further south, which has been interpreted as reflecting the Finnic expansion from the South that came to push the Sami further to the north.[Note 2] Some scholars locate the lands of *Kalevala* in East Karelia, where most of the *Kalevala* stories were written down. In 1961, the small town of *Uhtua* in the then Soviet Republic of Karelia was renamed *Kalevala*, perhaps to promote that theory.

Finnish politician and linguist Eemil Nestor Setälä rejected the idea that the heroes of *Kalevala* are historical in nature and suggested they are personifications of natural phenomena. He interprets Pohjola as the northern heavens and the Sampo as the pillar of the world. Setälä suggests that the journey to regain the Sampo is a purely imaginary one with the heroes riding a mythological boat or magical steed to the heavens.[6][124][125]

The practice of bear worship was once very common in Finland and there are strong echoes of this in the *Kalevala*.[18]

The old Finnish word *väinä* (a strait of deep water with a slow current) appears to be the origin of the name Väinämöinen; one of Väinämöinen's other names is Suvantolainen, *suvanto* being the modern word for *väinä*. Consequently, it is possible that the *Saari* (Island) might be the island of Saaremaa in Estonia and *Kalevala* the Estonian mainland.[50]

Finnish folklorists Matti Kuusi and Pertti Anttonen state that terms such as *the people of Kalevala* or *the tribe of Kalevala* were fabricated by Elias Lönnrot. Moreover, they contend that the word *Kalevala* is very rare in traditional poetry and that by emphasizing dualism (Kalevala vs. Pohjola) Elias Lönnrot created the required tension that made *The Kalevala* dramatically successful and thus fit for a national epic of the time.[50]

See also

- Finnish mythology
- Finnish national symbols
- Kalevipoeg
- Kaleva, Michigan Many of the street names from this small Michigan (USA) village were taken from the *Kalevala*.

Notes

1. Professor Tolkien disagreed with this characterization: "One repeatedly hears the 'Land of Heroes' described as the 'national Finnish Epic': as if a nation, besides if possible a national bank theatre and government, ought also automatically to possess a national epic. Finland does not. The K[alevala] is certainly not one. It is a mass of conceivably epic material; but, and I think this is the main point, it would lose nearly all that which is its greatest delight if it were ever to be epically handled."[2]
2. It may be noted that place-names and other evidence show that in the medieval period, the Sami lived far more south than in the modern age, well south of Lapland, and place-names of Sami origin are not only found all over White Karelia, but as far as the Svir River basin and Nyland. Finnic peoples, on the other hand, were in antiquity, in the Iron Age, probably originally limited to the coasts south of the Gulf of Finland, in what is now Estonia, and no further north than the Karelian Isthmus.[123] In view of this, the possibility of identifying Pohjola with Finland/Karelia and *Kalevala* with Estonia (see further below on the location of the *Saari*) suggests itself.

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External links

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